[29 cont.]

756 787 Soothsaying: In the common form of soothsaying, the petitioner kowtows to the shaman in the trance and presents his request. He may also let an experienced man do the asking. The soothsayer then holds his breast-shield flat on his left hand, takes barley kernels from a little plate with the tip of the sword, and scatters them on the shield. From the pattern of the kernels he now gives his answer. Often he also moves in a violent trance and mumbles all kinds of disjointed words which a practiced man quickly writes down on paper and which afterwards are interpreted. In the trance, the soothsayer may speak any language, Tibetan, Chinese, Tujen, Mongolic, even if he has not learned it.

This soothsaying also precedes all the other ceremonies that he performs during the trance, such as exorcising demons, healing the sick, etc.

[562] Calling: The shamans are always men. When someone thinks that he has the ability to go into a trance, he goes to a quiet, remote spot and experiments with a staff, a sword, etc. In time he becomes proficient. He also becomes aware of which spirit takes possession of him. Frequently the people in [792] the village propose to a young man that he should try it once. * [778] If he then succeeds, they suggest that he have himself consecrated in the lamic monastery. -- Most shamans take up this 756 calling of their own accord. Those who receive the art from their fathers are not common. The shamans are always healthy, [158] normal men; they are only more easily excitable (7).

7. [Foreign text p. 32.] They do not form an organization of their own. True, I have been repeatedly told that in the sixth month on the first (?) or fifteenth day the shamans of the Hsi-ch'uan gather in a village near Tuopa (west of Hei-tsuei-p'u) and organize a kind of trance competition for an entire day. This custom, however, is supposedly recent.

4: Schram M-5 (1911-1922) 1957 AE9 Monguor AE9

A lot of anecdotes, overlaid with fabulous legends, are told about powerful shamans who lived in former times. A famous shaman of Too long was invited to cure a dying man. The man died before his arrival. The soul of the shaman, after the completion of certain rites, went to see Erlik Khan, the King of Hell, and examining the files he found that the man had died several years before his destined time. The soul of the shaman came back; he performed a set of new rites and the man came to life and lived for several more years. I wondered how such anecdotes, known all over Asia, were spread among the Monguors. The overall conclusion, after all the talks about old famous shamans, was always: "We no longer have the stuff of which shamans are made, for the apprentices are no longer trained in the right way."

MONGUOR SHAMANS AND NEUROSIS

What about the general statement of the ethnologists that shamans are victims of neurosis? It is said of the brutal training of the apprentices among the nomads, in opposition to the most elementary principles of pedagogy, that nothing could have been devised, better calculated to unseat the reason and to form pitiable neurotics of them.

In former times, according to the Monguors, the training of the Monguor shamans must have been very similar. The recent cases of the two apprentices of the old Lu shaman seem to evidence this assumption. On the other hand, it is a known fact that among the hereditary diseases neurosis is the most frequently inherited. Because children of shamans must marry children of shamans, the danger of inheritance is increased and it creates a predisposition to produce more easily suggestions and hallucinations among the members of such families. The fact of the suicide of the boy No, unwilling to become a shaman, is suggestive. It seems, therefore, not too far fetched to suppose that the shamans and their apprentices easily get the conviction of seeing spirits and hearing them talk. Because they will see and hear them, they act accordingly, notwithstanding their actual superficial training. On the other hand, for neurosis, as for all diseases, the question of plus and minus is always open, but the morbid basis of the disease is always existent.

Some of the shamans performing the rites seem to act as though in a play, straining for effects. They give the profession a black eye, while others seem to mean business and to act as real shamans. After all, the fact remains that shamans never dare to quit the profession, notwithstanding that it is a poor means of livelihood.

SHAMAN DRESS AND IMPLEMENTS

DRESSES

The shaman when not performing rites for communities or private families, dresses in the same way as the Monguors, but while acting as shaman he wears a special